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Letter dated 19 March 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the question of Western Sahara, in particular the activities of my Personal Envoy, Mr. James A. Baker III, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1463 (2003) of 30 January 2003. By that resolution, the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 March 2003 in order to give the parties time to consider the proposal presented to them by my Personal Envoy, and requested me to provide a report on the situation by 17 March 2003.

As you are aware, just prior to the adoption by the Council of resolution 1463 (2003), my Personal Envoy undertook his latest round of consultations with the parties and neighbouring countries during his visit to the region between 14 and 17 January, where he presented and explained to them a proposal for a political solution of the conflict in Western Sahara providing for self-determination, as required by the Council in its resolution 1429 (2002) of 30 July 2002. Mr. Baker submitted his proposal, entitled "Peace plan for self-determination for the people of Western Sahara" to King Mohammed VI of Morocco on 14 January 2003, to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria on 15 January 2003, and to the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO, Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz, and President Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya of Mauritania on 16 January 2003.

Members of the Council should by now be acquainted with my Personal Envoy's proposal, which was informally circulated to them in early March.

When presenting his proposal to the parties and neighbouring countries, my Personal Envoy indicated to them that their views on it should be made available to him by early March, in order to give him sufficient time to assess them and provide me with his views on possible ways to move the process forward in Western Sahara. To date, not all the parties have provided their views on the proposal of my Personal Envoy.

In order to allow additional time for all the parties and neighbouring countries to submit their replies to my Personal Envoy, and to give him sufficient time to assess the parties' responses to his proposal, I propose to defer the submission of my report to the Security Council until 19 May 2003. I should also like to propose that the Council consider authorizing a technical extension of the mandate of MINURSO for a further period of two months, until 31 May 2003.

I should be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

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